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Book Reviews

Jesus Christ and the Christian Character. BY FRANCIS GREENWOOD PEABODY, Plummer Professor of Christian Morals in Harvard University. [The Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale University, 1904.] New York: Macmillan, 1905. Pp. 300. \$1.50.

Professor Peabody's previous suggestive book, entitled *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, prepared the public to expect an unusually valuable discussion in this latest volume. This expectation has been ably fulfilled. The book is one of the most timely productions of this present period of pertinent essays. Passing by various points of excellence, such as its charming literary style, its clear outline, and its constant touch with concrete ethical problems, we may mention three points in which Professor Peabody has shown his mastery of present conditions of scholarship.

1. The spirit of historical sympathy with the content of ancient literature is an achievement so recent that it has only begun to influence theological discussions. Too large a proportion of current publications fall into one of two classes. On the one hand are writers who see everything through the medium of dogmatic interpretation, and who represent Jesus as a theologian inculcating correct doctrines. On the other hand are men who have become intoxicated with the ideal of purely historical interpretation, regardless of doctrinal consequences, and who, in an exuberant revolt from tradition, have so emphasized the differences between the teachings of Jesus and modern convictions that the chasm seems appalling. Between these two extremes the present book moves with careful but confident steps. The method of historical sympathy is seen at its best, and under Professor Peabody's guidance one comes into close contact with the character of Jesus in its spiritual grandeur. It is frankly recognized that "there are many subjects concerning which Jesus has little to teach the modern world" (p. 292); yet the book is full of the conviction that modern moral problems can be rightly solved only as men learn from Jesus the secret of right life.

2. Another significant feature of the book is the elimination of all traces of formal legalism. Theological science has generally passed the time when serious attention would be given to an attempt to set forth Christian ethics by tabulating and classifying texts. But the indispensable scientific task of formulating the fundamental principles of Jesus' teaching may be prosecuted in such a way as to lose sight of the masterful character of the man whose insight could conceive such principles. If the personal

power of Jesus is eliminated from the gospel picture, a discussion even of "principles" will be spiritually arid. Professor Peabody shows his true appreciation of the gospel when he says that Jesus "is concerned not with devising ways of social redemption, but with creating people applicable to social redemption." The Christian character is therefore the primary subject of Christian ethics. The author's analysis of the elements of moral power in Jesus places proper emphasis upon that masterful character. What Jesus *was* is of more significance than what he taught.

3. This profound insight into the fundamental character of ethics as a dynamic expression of life rather than as a programme of social reform leads Professor Peabody to consider the source of vital power requisite for such life. "Among the most familiar of moral failures is the attempt to do good without the antecedent resolution to be good" (p. 196). The religious transformation of one's inner life is quite as essential as is one's understanding of moral problems. No ethical theory is complete until it reaches out into religion. To fill one's personal place in the social whole is impossible without the larger experience of finding one's place in God's universe. Christianity, as incarnate in Jesus, represents the "ascent of ethics" to religious communion with God; and then the "descent of faith" to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

In all three of the above respects the book embodies a clear insight into the fundamentals of the method and of the subject-matter of Christian ethics. And when to this high scholarly value one adds its extraordinary practical suggestiveness in the concrete problems of modern life, it is evident that the book is one which every pastor and teacher should read.

G. B. S.

The Growth of Christian Faith. BY GEORGE FERRIES. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1905. Pp. 368. \$2.50 net.

This volume is not strictly historical nor purely psychological. It aims to point out the path of religious growth for a certain class of matured men and women who have so much that is common in their temperament and in their intellectual and social environment that their individual peculiarities may be disregarded. He speaks to men and women "immersed in a life of sense, pressed on every hand by the secular ideas and fruits of science," who desire a religion that can be mediated by conscience and reason, and a belief that they can hold with intellectual honesty. To such a class this book will prove very helpful. Dr. Ferries evinces a broad sympathy and a deep spiritual insight; he is conservative in spirit and method, disengages